

VZCZCXRO4930
RR RUEH DU RUEH MR RUEH RN
DE RUEH TO #0901/01 2611751
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 171751Z SEP 08
FM AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9350
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEH LO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0234
RUEA IIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEH NSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MAPUTO 000901

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/16/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MZ](#)

SUBJECT: RENAMO SENDS ITS POPULAR MAYOR PACKING TOO

REF: MAPUTO 846

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Todd Chapman, Reasons 1.4(b+d)

1. (C) SUMMARY: RENAMO leadership chose not to nominate the incumbent mayor of Beira, Daviz Simango, as that party's candidate in November municipal elections. Simango, a competent technocrat who has ably administered the city over the past five years and who enjoys widespread popular support, is mounting a campaign to run as an independent that looks likely to garner him a second term. Commentators suggest that the surprise move stems from RENAMO elders' questions about Simango's loyalty to the party, from his campaign against graft and corruption that cut into some party members' revenue streams, and from his popularity--which was perceived as a threat to RENAMO leader Alfonso Dhlakama's control of the party. Simango's national name recognition and loyal backing could put him in a position to lead a shake-up of Mozambique's sclerotic political system, controlled by the ruling FRELIMO party with RENAMO serving as an increasingly weak opposition. END SUMMARY.

RENAMO Mayor Kept from Reelection, Will Run Independently

2. (U) In a surprise move, opposition party RENAMO announced on August 28 that the popular incumbent mayor of Beira, Daviz Simango, would not be chosen to run again as the party's candidate for the mayorship in November elections, and little-known parliamentarian and RENAMO National Council member Manuel Pereira would run instead. Party leader Afonso Dhlakama claimed no hand in the party's decision to elect Pereira over Simango as their nominee for the Mayor of Beira, saying instead that it was a "grassroots call for change," verbatim language to that used by FRELIMO when that party voted not to allow the equally popular mayor of Maputo to run for reelection (reftel). Simango told the press on August 29 that RENAMO had not officially informed him that he was not their nominee. He had nonetheless already planned for this scenario by collecting 30,000 signatures, drafting nomination papers, and coordinating independent party backing in a matter of days. On September 4, Simango officially submitted his nomination papers as an independent candidate with the National Elections Commission (CNE), under the party name Group for Reflection and Change (GRM). On September 11, mayor Simango fired three RENAMO political delegates who sat as de facto silent partners on the Beira City Council, suggesting that Simango has made a clean break with RENAMO leadership. At the same time, press reports indicate that RENAMO is having difficulties collecting the 2,307 signatures required to officially recognize Manuel Pereira as their candidate for Mayor and obtaining the "certificate of residence" from the Beira City Council to prove Pereira's domicile in Beira for at least six months--especially challenging given that Pereira lives in Maputo.

Capable Administration Meant High Ratings

13. (U) Daviz Simango (no relation to FRELIMO's David Simango) was chosen by RENAMO to run for office in Beira in 2003, which he won by an almost 11 percent margin out of 53,015 votes cast. With a background in engineering and virtually no political experience, he quickly settled into the role of a technocrat, solving a variety of perennial problems in Beira, chief among them the provision of public restrooms, ameliorating basic sanitary conditions in the city. Five years following his election, Simango remains very popular, viewed as an excellent administrator who is young, approachable, and charismatic. Beira city residents praise him for the road construction and public works projects, and an accompanying reduction in the level of corruption, which have noticeably improved living conditions for the average resident.

Mayor,s Popularity Threatened RENAMO Elders

14. (C) RENAMO spokeswoman Ivone Soares told poloffs on September 11 that Daviz Simango has been distancing himself from the party in Beira for some time, and that senior RENAMO members were unhappy that Beira residents associated the positive changes in their city with Simango, rather than the party that brought him to power in 2003. RENAMO apparatchiks in Beira feel marginalized, according to Soares, because Simango introduced his own team of capable young

MAPUTO 00000901 002 OF 002

administrators who showed direct allegiance to him rather than RENAMO. For this reason, she suggested, Simango was not renominated, and the party is currently in discussions as to whether his independent candidature invalidates his status as a member of RENAMO. Separately, RENAMO intellectual Dr. Joao Pereira told PolSpecialist on September 9 that party leader Afonso Dhlakama unilaterally decided that Simango would not be renominated. Joao Pereira indicated that elders within RENAMO disliked Simango's hard stance on corruption, which cut into their income flows. He also suggested that Dhlakama, who has removed other capable RENAMO leaders in the past and those that publicly disagree with him, including three previous party secretary generals--viewed Simango's popularity as threatening Dhlakama's primacy as party leader.

(Note: David Aloni, the only RENAMO party member to publicly criticize Simango's removal, calling the decision irrational and dangerous, died of a heart attack following a reportedly bitter argument with Dhlakama on August 30 about this subject. End Note)

COMMENT: An Independent Candidate to Shake Up the System?

15. (C) The decision not to renominate Simango and the resulting press attention appears to be a miscalculation by RENAMO. Simango, already a nationally-known figure respected for his work in Beira, has the potential to lead a successful third-party campaign, something rarely seen in Mozambican politics. His appeal suggests that control of Beira--RENAMO's most significant urban stronghold--may slip out of the party's control following the November 19 municipal elections, marginalizing RENAMO politically in an area where FRELIMO is also weak. Simango's break with RENAMO and his entry on the political stage as an independent could breathe new life into a political environment where the ruling FRELIMO party has increasingly consolidated power over government institutions and stifled the growth of opposition parties. Simango will be someone to watch.

Chapman
Chapman